

PREFACE

122 The material for this report was gathered by the second Venezuelan Expedition of the University Museum, of the University of Pennsylvania, 1933-34. The field trip to the Yaruros lasted three months. Mr. Arthur P. Rossi and Señor Carlos Defendini of Caracas participated in the work of the expedition for short periods of time. My thanks go to both.

OTO It is impossible to list all of those friends who helped the expedition in its work, for to do everyone justice I should have to include many whose names I never learned or whom I knew only by their first names. The Caraqueños were most kind and generous but the Llaneros no less; and later when I came in contact with the Andinos I found them no different. I thank, therefore, the whole Venezuelan people for their wholehearted hospitality and the facilities which their Government put at the expedition's disposal.

I am especially indebted to Dr. Alfredo Jahn, who not only put his library at my disposal but gave me an insight into Venezuelan anthropology. He compiled the bibliography on the Yaruro language. My thanks go also to Dr. Gumersindo Torres for many introductions and much friendship; to Mr. Rudolph Dolge, whose vast library was always at my disposal; to Señor Don Mancoel Sanchez for hospitality at his ranch and permission to excavate an archeological site on his property; to the Phelps family.

The expedition is further indebted to the United Fruit Co. for transportation to Baranquilla; to the Venezuelan Oil Co. for information about the llanos.

The Department of State and the Pan American Union introduced the expedition to the Venezuelan Government and scientific bodies. I am especially indebted to the Honorable Sumner Welles, Undersecretary of State; to the Honorable George T. Summerlin, at that time American Minister to Venezuela; to the late Mr. George Orr, Consul General to Caracas, who took more than an official interest in the work of the expedition; to Dr. L. S. Rowe, Director of the Pan American Union; and to Dr. E. Gil Borges, formerly Assistant Director of the Pan American Union. I thank also the Academia de Ciencias Matematicas, Fisicas y Naturales, whose members, in addi-

174 It is well to note that the llanos form a sort of cul-de-sac from which there is only one escape, and that is by way of the Orinoco River. It is quite likely that the llanos have been the camping grounds and the highway for a number of tribes migrating northward, southward, or eastward. For peoples practicing agriculture, Guiana and the lower Orinoco region would be more suitable than the plains of Apure, where, on account of the strong winds and the sandy soil, it is difficult to carry on any cultivation of the soil. The mountainous regions to the north and west are also fit for agriculture. Therefore it was only the culturally poorer tribes that would remain in the llanos.

101 We have, therefore, in the following pages, a people who are primitive hunters, whose history is unknown, who do not seem to be linguistically related to any other group, and whose appearance is strongly mongoloid—who have been in contact not only with foreign indigenous culture but with some European culture, and who are facing physical and cultural extinction. Perhaps this last fact should be
121 allowed to dominate this study, because it can throw into relief much of Yaruro culture and will remind us that anthropology is not so much signs of things as the signs of man, and that his problems and the way he solves them is as important, if not more important, than purely historical problems and theories. The opportunity of studying religion, social organization, and general spiritual culture of a South American tribe was so strong that during my stay with the Yaruros I concentrated with these phases of their culture rather than on the material phases or linguistic problems.

MY JOURNEY TO AND LIFE WITH THE YARUROS

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177 Contact with the Yaruros is not easy. No one ever knows near what water hole or at what point on the river these nomads may be found. Several centuries of maltreatment have made them shy and suspicious of strangers and particularly of all "Racionales." Primitive and loosely organized, they could not and cannot today offer any effective resistance to civilized groups which may want to exploit them. At the time of my visit everyone along our route was indignant over the treatment that about 150 Yaruros had received at the hands of unknown local "jefes civiles" about a month before. They were seized and matcheted to death, reducing the total population of this tribe (excluding bands that may be hidden along the Sinaruco River) to one-half. My presence in their midst naturally aroused fears that some fresh calamity was about to befall them.

In the rainy season there is only one way of penetrating the llanos of Apure, and that is by boat. From the Orinoco one can sail or

122 paddle up the five rivers: the Apure, Arauca, Capanaparo, Sinaruco, and the Meta. In the dry season it is possible to make one's way southward from Caracas by way of Ortiz, Calabozo, San Fernando de Apure, to San Juan de Payara by automobile, and then on horseback to Cunaviche and beyond. Beginning our journey from Caracas at the end of January, we followed the latter route.

San Juan de Payara and Cunaviche are ancient colonial mission villages and the farthest outposts of civilization in the llanos. There are no missions there now. Their populations are typically llanero; that is, civilized mixed bloods. We rode southward across the dry and sandy plains, over which roam herds of wild cattle and horses. Mirages, which amazed the widely traveled Humboldt, were frequent. In the treeless plains forests were suspended in the sky, horses ran through the air, and great clear lakes stretched out before us. But water was scarce, and had we not been guided by men who knew every square inch of the ground we should have suffered for lack of it. We picked up our guides in relays on the way, a merry, capable lot, with much Indian blood in their veins, conscious of being free men of the llanos whom no dictator nor army has been able to tame. At night, if we stopped at a ranch, we listened to cowboy songs accompanied by the harp and rattle, music which reflected Indian, Spanish, and Negro influences. Our meager baggage was carried by an unwilling bull. Using a common cowboy expedient, we tied its nose to the guide's horse's tail and the bull was literally dragged all the way to El Buron.²

123 We made our first contact with the Yaruros at El Buron, a ranch owned by Don Manuel Hurtado. Don Manuel, like most of the native llaneros, is sympathetic to the Yaruros, and keeps on friendly terms with them. With his help and that of his household, particularly a young woman called Maria, we attempted to establish friendly relations with the Yaruros. In the llanos human beings are not plentiful, and consequently, it doesn't occur to them to erect social barriers that would tend to keep various groups apart.

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511 There was not much about the camp of the Yaruros to interest the casual glance. There were present about a dozen women, eight men, and some children. The extreme poverty and simplicity of the camp were its outstanding features. There were no houses, nor shelters of any sort; only a few old baskets, a few sticks, a few rags, calabashes and water jars, and a few seminaked human beings lying half buried in the sand under the shade of thinly leafed branches thrust into the ground. Several fires were burning, and over them there were pots

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² In working cattle the llanero ties one end of his lariat to his horse's tail instead of to the saddle, which often he may be lacking. The horses are trained to keep the rope taut after the animal is roped.

791 the universe, his understanding of life and death, of the history of his people and their future, of morality, and of justice. Likewise he was anxious to hear what message I had to bring from my people in respect to these things. So, sitting under the shelter of some branches, we talked. As we talked we both worked. Pablo Reyes kept his hands occupied making string, fixing bows and arrows, and I, when not busy writing, pretended to carve little figures out of wood. The children played about us and Pablo's three wives kept shyly in the background, though listening carefully to what we said and often throwing inquisitive glances in our direction.

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592 Profiting by our proximity to Guiana, I decided to visit Urbana where I could buy some goods for my friends and at the same time gather information about archeology. The wind blew so hard it proved necessary to drag the canoe along the shore of the island until we found the best place for a crossing. The sand was raised in clouds and our bodies were peppered with it so that we were forced to cover up closely. It finally proved impossible to continue and we were forced to stop and camp in the open with our backs to the wind and no shelter except what we could get from our hammocks. But holding them up was as much a hardship as to be bombarded by sand. We made one attempt to cross the Orinoco in the afternoon but we were forced to give it up. Finally, late in the afternoon, putting our trust in "God and the Virgin," as the Venezuelan canoe men say, we launched the canoe and reached La Urbana about midnight. Our stay there was necessarily short and we hastened back to Linda Bara the following day, but I gathered enough from the examination of collections at the Salesian Mission to determine that the archeology on that side of the Orinoco is quite different from that of the llanos.

136 At sunset as we were approaching the island we saw an army of bats in flight. The bats were coming as a cloud out of a Guiana hill in the far distance, and flew directly over us, and across to the other shore of the river, disappearing into the forest. We watched this vast army for about 15 minutes and then continued on our way, not because we had seen the last of the bats, but because time was short. I was told by my guide that this daily flight of the bats from the hills of Guiana across the Orinoco generally lasts two hours. How many thousands of them live in this cave and fly daily to forage for food in the forest is a matter of conjecture. The bat, so plentiful in this region, seems to have inspired the ancient potters of the llanos to use the head as a motif of decoration.

[172] 124 When we reached Pablo Reyes the next day we found there several other Yaruro families, relatives of Pablo, encamped with him. We talked some more, then departed several days later in order to return to Landaeta, who proved to be my best informant.

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1. Llanero horseman. Note the toe stirrup and lack of bridle. 2. Author's party traveling across Apure. Note the rope tied to the horse's tail and the bull's nose. 3. Sand dunes in the Llanos of Apure.

End Plate D

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along the west-to-east flowing rivers in ribbons some kilometers wide. Most significant fauna and flora of economic use occur in these ribbons. This ecological distribution of resources governs subsistence activities whether they be mainly hunting, fishing, collecting, or horticulture.

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Yaruro subsistence comprises all these activities. (2). Horticulture in the rainy season appears considerably to outweigh all other sources of food together, but in the dry season, hunting, fishing, and collecting perhaps equal or outstrip horticulture. In any case, slash and burn gardening of manioc, corn, plantains, and a number of lesser crops is by far the single most important economic activity. The technology is exceedingly simple in all aspects of production, the main tools being the machete and digging stick. The most elaborate technology occurs in the conversion of food into edibles and in the manufacture of hammocks, pottery, objects of wood such as canoes, and woven containers of all types.

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The economic organization displays a sharp division of labor between men's and women's work. Men do all hunting and fishing, make all objects of wood, haul lumber and householding materials, make hammocks, and carry out the heavy labor of gardening. Women do most of the collecting of roots, seeds, and fruits. Since collecting contributes a substantial portion of the food supply in summer, woman's contribution, here, is of considerable communal importance. Women's work, a continuous activity from dawn to dusk, is, first, the conversion of raw foodstuffs into edibles. Second, women make all pottery, mats and baskets, the manioc squeezers, and much of the cord used to make hammocks. Another important contribution of women is their help in harvesting in the gardens. Men sometimes help the women with the cookery.

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Men may work alone, in groups of 2 or 3, or in larger groups on rare occasions. No occasion exists for all men to work at a single task since there is no technological need for it. Women's work groups for collecting or householding are of similar size. Work group alignments are often based on choice or accident but in other instances coresidence and kinship are determinants. The household, however, constitutes the only really necessary cooperative group for production. The man is a funnel for produce which the woman converts to

(2) The present description applies to the Cinaruco River Yaruro where the major part of the writer's field work, supported by a grant from the Social Science Research Council, was done. The Capanaparo River Yaruro were reported by Petruccio (1939) and Le Besnerais (1948) as being hunters and gatherers, although Le Besnerais observed small horticultural patches which he claimed were diffusions from Venezuelan farmers which had occurred recently. Le Besnerais in 1954 states directly that they were horticulturalists, omitting any mention of possible diffusions from Venezuelans. The passing mention of horticulture by Flanagan (1947) confirms the present writer in his opinion that, although horticulture may be more restricted on the Capanaparo than on the Cinaruco and Cunaviche-Arauca (where the writer also spent several weeks) which are not discussed at all by Petruccio or Le Besnerais, nevertheless, the absence of horticulture is probably not aboriginal with the Yaruro as has been suggested by Kirchhoff (1948, p. 456). Rather the restricted gardening is a result of ecological conditions on the Capanaparo which are less favorable to horticulture than on the neighboring rivers, combined with extremely violent acculturation, including large-scale massacres of natives. The only other possibility, in my opinion, is that horticulture was introduced by the missionaries in the early part of the Eighteenth Century, which is certainly the period when the Yaruro first became acquainted with iron tools (cf. Lodaes, 1922).

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SOME PROBLEMS OF YARURO ETHNOHISTORY*

Anthony Leeds

I WAS FIRST led to consider Yaruro history because the ethnographic phenomena I found differed radically from those described by Petrullo (1939 a). Only historical research could resolve these differences. I shall first examine the discrepancies, then turn to the kinds of historical sources relevant to resolving the problems and to some of the material already examined, and, finally, briefly discuss the direction that the results appear to be taking. [21] [114]

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Petrullo, describes the Yaruro of the Capanaparo River as being hunters of 22 river and llanos animals, fishers of river fish, and gatherers of seeds, roots, 24/ and fruits. He denies the presence of horticulture, except among a few "ac- 114 cultured" groups. As far as the monograph informs us, he visited only Yaruro near the mouth of the Capanaparo and on islands in the Orinoco during the months of the dry season. He did not visit the Arauca, Cunaviche, upper Capanaparo, Riccito, and Sinaruco rivers, on all of which Yaruro are found today, and apparently have been living indefinitely into the past, according to old maps.¹ On the basis of the groups visited, he asserts that the Yaruro were not horticultural. Kirchhoff (1948 a: 436) repeats this assertion, adding that Gillij (1780-1784: Vol. 3) mentions the use of green corn — a sign, according to Kirchhoff, of the recent adoption of corn at that time. No basis is given for this statement. Le Besnerais, in several publications (1948; 1950a; 1951; and, with Dreyfus-Roche, 1954), repeats that the Yaruro were hunters and gatherers, but, in his most recent work (1950 b; 1954; Ms.; Personal communication,

* I wish to thank Juan Friede for a number of bibliographical suggestions. The research is being supported by the American Philosophical Society and the Research Institute for the Study of Man. My thanks and appreciation go to both. [122]

¹ Cf. maps listed in the special section of the bibliography, many of which show the location of the Yaruro, Otomaco, Achagua ("as Chaguas"), Sáliva, Aruaca, Caribe, or a number of other tribes at various points in history.